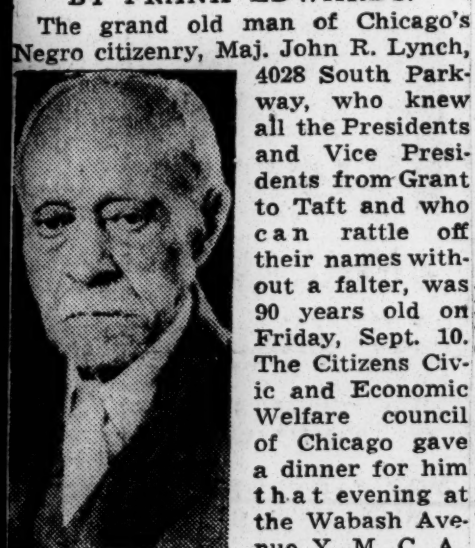


MAJ. JOHN LYNCH AT 90 REVIEWS LIFE OF ACTION

Soldier and Lawyer, He Serves U. S.

BY FRANK EDWARDS.



Maj. John R. Lynch.
[Moffett Photo.]

The grand old man of Chicago's Negro citizenry, Maj. John R. Lynch, 4028 South Parkway, who knew all the Presidents and Vice Presidents from Grant to Taft and who can rattle off their names without a falter, was 90 years old on Friday, Sept. 10. The Citizens Civic and Economic Welfare council of Chicago gave a dinner for him that evening at the Wabash Avenue Y. M. C. A., and he will tell you with a quiet smile and an emphatic shake of the head that he had a "splendid" time. Maj. Lynch, who overcame obvious obstacles to see and take part in more of the pageant of American history than most living men, and who is listed in Who's Who and "The Negro in the Political Classics of the American Government," was born Sept. 10, 1847, on a plantation near Vidalia, Concordia parish, Louisiana.

Avid Reader as Boy.

When he was a child his parents moved to Natchez, Miss., and there he attended evening schools and received instruction from private tutors. With the same hunger for knowledge that burned in the lean Illinoisan who was later to become his and his people's idol, he read all the good literature on which he could

lay his hands. 2-19-37

At the outbreak of the civil war he was still too young to be a soldier, but later, after Grant captured Vicksburg and then pushed on to take Natchez, he served for a few months as a cook for an Illinois regiment of the Union army. His sharpest memory of that period, however, is of the news of Lincoln's assassination. "There was great grief," he said softly, reverently. "We idolized him."

Then Maj. Lynch took up photography [then daguerreotype] and continued to read and study in his spare time. He recalls that once, after finishing a piece of fiction, "Adventure of a Boy," he asked himself sharply what he had gained. He has not read a line of fiction since. The study of law drew his concentrated attention, however, and he mastered parliamentary procedure.

Enters State Assembly.

In 1869 Gov. Adelbert Ames appointed the young Negro justice of the peace for Adams county, Miss., a position which he held until the fall of that year, when he was elected to the state house of representatives. He served from 1869 to 1871 and became known as the best informed parliamentarian in the house. As a result he was reelected, and during his second term he served as the first Negro speaker of the Mississippi house of representatives.

According to Maj. Lynch, there was political and racial harmony until the financial panic of 1873 drove all white southerners back into the Democratic party and reduced the Republican party there to a nonentity.

Elected to Congress.

Maj. Lynch's next step in public life was his election as a Republican to the United States house of representatives, where he served in the 43d and 44th congresses from March 4, 1873, to March 3, 1877.

During this period he took an active part on behalf of the civil rights bill, which was passed in 1875, and was present to vote the admittance of Colorado into the Union in 1876. He later was elected to the 47th congress and served in the house from April 29, 1882, to March 3, 1883.

Maj. Lynch then returned to his Mississippi plantation and served for several years as state Republican chairman and member of the Republican national committee. He was delegate to the Republican national conventions of 1877, 1880, 1884, 1892, 1900, and 1904, the last of which nominated Theodore Roosevelt.

Open Mind on Parties.

At the 1884 convention in Chicago, which nominated James G. Blaine, he was elected temporary chairman. He will tell you very definitely, however, that he is the Teddy Roosevelt kind of a Republican. Under President Harrison Maj. Lynch served as fourth auditor of the treasury for the navy department from 1889 to 1893. Then he resumed his study of law and was admitted to the Mississippi bar in 1896. He returned to Washington, D. C., in 1897, was admitted to the bar by reciprocity and practiced until the outbreak of the Spanish-American war in 1898. President McKinley then appointed him a major and paymaster of volunteers, and he served three years in Cuba and two years in the Philippines during and after the war.

His Status Upheld.

Maj. Lynch recalls that once during the war, when he was paying off soldiers in Florida, a Texas regiment refused to accept the money from him because of his color. He told them politely but firmly that it was his duty. The colonel of the regiment then told him to give way in the interests of harmony, but Maj. Lynch replied that he was not in the army to give way but to perform his duty. They still would not take the money.

The question went to President McKinley, who immediately backed up Maj. Lynch and declared that the officers of the regiment had laid themselves open to court martial. When a fellow officer asked Maj. Lynch if he still intended to pay off the regiment, the latter said:

"Yes, I'll pay them if I lose my life doing it. I have to discharge my duty." 4-19-37

Still Active in Law.

After the war President McKinley appointed Maj. Lynch a paymaster in the regular army with the rank of captain. In 1906 he was promoted to major and in 1911 he was retired on pension. The next year he moved to Chicago and was admitted to the bar by reciprocity.

"Too young to be inactive," as he puts it, Maj. Lynch still conducts his law practice in the neat, comfortable office of his home.

"I no longer take an active part in politics, for I have no future aspirations that way," he laughingly explains. "My interests are my law practice and my friends, although I do vote at every election. In local

elections I believe in voting for or against the individual and in national elections for or against parties."

Twenty-seven years ago Maj. Lynch married his second wife, the present Mrs. Cora E. Lynch. At the time he told her he thought he would live five years more. Now his goal is 100.